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SUBJECT: SPECIAL PAKISTAN MEDIA REACTION - RICHARD HOLBROOKE'S
VISIT TO PAKISTAN: FEBRUARY 12, 2009

Summary: U.S. Special Envoy Richard Holbrooke's visit to Pakistan continued to garner extensive media coverage Thursday. All newspapers highlighted his visit to Lahore, Peshawar, and Mohmand Agency and his meetings with the representatives of various strata of society. Some sample headlines about Holbrooke's engagements: "Holbrooke arrives in Lahore, meets Nawaz Sharif and other leaders today," (Jang); "Holbrooke meets civil society activists in Lahore," (Ummat); "Anti-terror talks in Landi Kotal; Holbrooke and U.S., NATO, Afghan officials attend meeting with Pakistan Army," (The News); "Holbrooke flies over tribal areas, Swat," (Dawn); "Holbrooke gave no assurance of Dr. Aafia's release: Human Rights Network" (Ummat).

Almost all major newspapers ran analytical editorials and opinion-articles on wide-ranging facets of the visit of the U.S. Special Envoy Holbrooke to the region. The prestigious independent national daily, "Dawn," noted that "Mr. Holbrooke's public demands will be hashed out, bargained over and accepted or rejected in private and it's those decisions that will shape Pak-U.S. relations in the months and years ahead..." In a surprise move, the Pro-Taliban Jihadi daily, "Islam," extolled the formation of the joint group by saying that "it will help both countries understand and move forward to come out of this sticky situation." The Islamabad-based English daily, "Pakistan Observer," noted that the "new approach has the potential to deliver but it depends on Pakistan's ability to influence the process and sincerity on the part of the United States to listen to the voice of reason." The centrist national daily, "The News," observed that "whilst we welcome the new spirit of dialogue and inclusivity, we also wonder if the team on our side will have the delegated authority to engage in the substantive dialogue that will enabled us to capitalize on this fresh opportunity." End Summary.

News Stories

"Richard Holbrooke Arrives In Lahore, Meets Nawaz Sharif And Other Leaders Today" "Jang" (02/12)

"U.S. President's special envoy on Pakistan and Afghanistan Richard Holbrooke arrived in Lahore from Islamabad. Richard Holbrooke will meet PML-N leader Nawaz Sharif, Governor Salmaan Taseer and will attend a lunch hosted by Principal Officer of U.S. Consulate Lahore Bryan Hunt. The visiting envoy will meet Ch. Shujaat Hussain, Ch. Pervaiz Elahi and other leaders at the lunch."

"Holbrooke Meets Civil Society Activists In Lahore" "Ummat" (02/12)

"U.S. Envoy Richard Holbrook met with the representatives of the civil society in Lahore. Prominent lawyer's leader Aitzaz Ahsan said following his meeting with the U.S. Envoy, he made no demands from the visiting U.S. emissary."

"Anti-Terror Talks In Landi Kotal; Holbrooke and U.S., NATO, Afghan Officials Attend Meeting With Pakistan Army" "The News" (02/12)

"A lengthy meeting of officials of the U.S., NATO, Afghan and Pakistan Army was held at Landi Kotal Garrison to discuss security situation at the Pak-Afghan border And NATO supply route on Wednesday. Sources told 'The News' that the U.S. special representative for Pakistan and Afghanistan, Richard Holbrooke, also attended the meeting."

"Holbrooke Visits Peshawar And Mohmand Agency, Gets Briefing On Operation Against Militants" "Jang" (02/12)

"Special envoy Richard Holbrooke visited Peshawar and Mohmand Agency on Wednesday where he was briefed by military commanders on military operation against militants. The envoy also met Lt. General Masood Aslam and Governor Awais Ahmed Ghani."

"Holbrooke Flies Over Tribal Areas, Swat" "Dawn" (02/12)

"U.S. special envoy for Pakistan and Afghanistan Richard Holbrooke made an extensive aerial visit of the tribal region and Swat on Wednesday. In Peshawar, according to security officials, Mr. Holbrooke met NWFP Governor Owais Ahmad Ghani, Chief Minister Ameer Haider Hoti and Corps Commander Lt-Gen Masood Aslam."

"Holbrook Gave No Assurance Of Dr. Aafia's Release: Human Rights Network" "Ummat" (02/12)

"Intekhab Sori, an official of the Human Rights Network, said in Karachi that in a meeting with Dr. Fouzia, U.S. Ambassador Richard Holbrooke gave no assurance for the release of Dr. Aafia."

"Commanders Brief U.S. Envoy On Operations" "The Nation" (02/12)

"Military commanders on Wednesday briefed a new U.S. troubleshooter (Richard Holbrooke) on the fight against militants in the border areas with Afghanistan during a visit to northwest Pakistan, officials said."

"U.S. Will Assist Pakistan In Curbing Militancy, Says Holbrooke" "Daily Times" (02/12)

"U.S. Special Representative on Pakistan and Afghanistan Richard Holbrooke met military and civilian leaders on Wednesday to discuss operations against Al Qaeda and the Taliban in the Tribal Areas, and pledged 'all out U.S. assistance' to help Pakistan maintain law and order in NWFP."

"Pakistan Demands Latest Weaponry" "The Nation" (02/12)

"In their interaction with special U.S. envoy Richard Holbrooke, Pakistani leaders have demanded provision of latest military equipment from the Obama administration including Cobra helicopters for its security forces battling Taliban led militants in the tribal areas, said a senior official in Islamabad desiring not to be named."

"Pakistan Wants More From U.S." "Daily Times" (02/12)

"Pakistan warned U.S. special envoy Richard Holbrooke on Tuesday it expected more from the United States in return for its cooperation against Al Qaeda and the Taliban, a Washington Post report says. Statements issued by President Asif Zardari and Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani, after meeting with the envoy, emphasized the need to 'expedite' a new U.S. aid package, and 'the importance of enhanced cooperation in defence and intelligence sharing.'"

"U.S., U.K. May Be Losing Patience With Islamabad: Report" "Dawn" (02/12)

"The arrival in Islamabad of Richard Holbrooke and Britain's appointment of its own diplomat as a special envoy for Pakistan and Afghanistan indicates a loss of patience with the democratic government both countries had invested so much hope and diplomacy in, says Dean Nelson, the South Asia editor of Daily Telegraph, in a write-up (Pakistan will be a stern test of Washington's 'smart power') published on Wednesday."

"Holbrooke Analyzing Scale And Complexity Of His Task" "The News" (02/12)

"President Barack Obama's point man, Richard Holbrooke, is seeing up close the scale and complexity of his task to overhaul U.S. policies in Afghanistan and Pakistan as he tours the region. Holbrooke, in Pakistan until Thursday before going to Afghanistan and India, is expected to redefine objectives and present a new strategy at a NATO Summit on April 2."

Editorials/Op-eds

"Subtext Of Pak-U.S. Ties," an editorial in the Karachi-based center-left independent national English daily "Dawn" (cir. 55,000) (02/12)

"As expected, U.S. Special Representative Richard Holbrooke has delivered a stern message: eliminate the militants' safe havens in FATA.... Yet, American dealings with Pakistan are such that tweaks in policies come in the shape of secret 'offers' and 'deals' to which the public is not privy.... The point is, Mr. Holbrooke's public demands will be hashed out, bargained over and accepted or rejected in private and it's those decisions that will shape

Pak-U.S. relations in the months and years ahead.... In such murky circumstances - even giving the Americans the benefit of the doubt that they do in fact seek deeper ties with Pakistan - it is unlikely that soft power will trump the military option."

"U.S. And Pakistan Agree To Form Joint Group," an editorial note in the Karachi-based, pro Taliban Jihadi Urdu daily "Islam" (cir. 15,000) (02/12)

"It is commendable that the U.S. Special Envoy Richard Holbrooke talked to Pakistani officials like a diplomat instead of assuming a role of policeman. He uttered less, and listened more. Such people are very shrewd and sensible. Similarly, the decision to form a joint group is also praiseworthy, as it will help both countries understand and move forward to come out of this sticky situation."

"Pakistan Will Have To Do More," an editorial in the Islamabad-based rightist English daily "Pakistan Observer" (cir. 5,000) (02/12)

"The outcome of the intensive interaction that U.S. Special Representative Richard Holbrooke had with the Pakistani leadership on Tuesday conveys the impression that things were moving in the right direction as far as Islamabad's perception was concerned. There is enthusiasm that the United States has decided to associate Pakistan with the process of reviewing the existing policy and formulation of the new strategy to deal with the problem of extremism and militancy. The new approach has the potential to deliver but it depends on Pakistan's ability to influence the process and sincerity on the part of the United States to listen to the voices of reason."

"Gloves Off," an editorial in the centrist national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (02/12)

"The Americans are coming prepared to talk this time rather than merely dictate and then walk away. They want to see structures and individuals that they can talk to and negotiate and work with. Thus we welcome the creation of a bi-partisan interagency team which is jointly led by Special Envoy Richard Holbrooke and our own Foreign Minister Ahmed Shah Qureshi.... Whilst we welcome the new spirit of dialogue and inclusivity, we also wonder if the team on our side will have the delegated authority to engage in the substantive

dialogue that will enable us to capitalize on this fresh opportunity."

"An Onerous Task," an editorial in the center-right national English daily "The Nation" (cir. 20,000) (02/12)

"The most important outcome of Mr. Holbrooke's visit is the formation of two inter-agency teams, one comprising Pakistani officials and the other Washington's nominees.... The review presents Pakistan with both a challenge and an opportunity.... It is time Pakistan's team effectively lobbies with its counterparts for a holistic and multifaceted approach to the phenomena of extremism and terrorism."

"Richard Holbrooke's Pakistan Visit," an editorial in liberal Urdu daily "Express" (cir. 100,000)

"This is a positive development that both the sides now agree that extremist in the region cannot be combated through use of force only.... If America thinks that Afghanistan cannot be resolved sans Pakistan then it should work on curtailing increasing Indian influence in the country.... Pakistan has rightly demanded support for the resolution of the Kashmir dispute for the establishment of lasting peace in the region."

"Holbrooke's Visit," an editorial in the Lahore-based liberal English daily "The Post" (cir. 5,000) (02/12)

"If Holbrooke means his statement when he says that he is in Pakistan to listen to the Pakistani leadership and familiarize himself with complex issues, his tour should be taken positively.... Signaling a positive and dynamic change in dealing with the situation in Afghanistan and on the Pak-Afghan border will definitely yield results. Unless the U.S. revises its policy of stamping out terrorism and violating our sovereignty, success in the war against terrorism cannot be guaranteed."

"Holbrooke And Qureshi Are Setting The Direction Right," an editorial in the Lahore-based liberal English language daily "Daily Times" (cir. 10,000) (02/12)

"As part of a new strategy, the two sides have agreed to set up an inter-agency team which will be jointly headed by Mr. Holbrooke and Pakistan's Foreign Minister, Shah Mehmood Qureshi.... The joint mechanism also means the two sides want to arrive at commonalities; moreover, that the U.S. wants to bring on board Pakistan's security and other concerns.... The joint consultative mechanism should allow Islamabad to voice its concerns more effectively and get them plugged into U.S. policy."

"American Envoy Should Convey Our Message," an editorial in the Karachi-based center-right sensationalist Urdu daily "Ummat" (cir. 33,000) (02/12)

"Current U.S. policy in the region is dangerous for both Pakistan and the U.S., and the U.S. administration must listen to Pakistani advice for dialogue with the moderate Taliban, and equipping Pakistan Army to take lead in the fight instead of the U.S. resorting to drone attacks by itself. But the real question is that does the new government in Washington really want peace in the region, or it will continue to carry out its secret plans for the region."

"Committee To Review U.S. Policy," an editorial in Hyderabad based liberal and independent Sindhi Daily "Kawish" (Cir.105, 000) (02/12)

"The review of policy must take into account the broader aspects of stability and not just the U.S. interests alone. The U.S. must acknowledge that its policy on Afghanistan was a failure, and unleashed the menace of extremism in Pakistan. It must stop drone attacks on Pakistan so that Pakistan is not forced to an extent to reconsider its decision to remain an ally of the U.S. in the war on terror."

"Obama Administrations' Decision To Review Pak-Afghan policy," an editorial in Hyderabad based liberal and independent Sindhi Daily

"Ibrat" (Cir. 80,000) (02/12)

"The worthy outcome of the U.S. Envoy Holbrooke's visit is the formation of a three-member joint group which will coordinate operations against the militants. In the meantime, President Obama has also ordered to review policy on Afghanistan and Pakistan. Only time will decide what will be the outcome of these changes. However, one sees these two steps as positive and in the right direction."

"New U.S. Strategy About Pakistan?" an editorial in the Karachi-based, pro Taliban Jihadi Urdu daily "Islam" (cir. 15,000) (02/12)

"There is no doubt that the U.S.-Pakistan ties have become so complicated and intricate following 9/11 terror incidents that on the one side there is the U.S. and its allies, and Pakistan is playing a frontline state in the U.S.-led war on terror, and on the other the U.S. is carrying out against Pakistan whatever it can do against an enemy from leveling serious allegations to the direct attacks on Pakistani soil. The logical outcome of this state of affairs was extreme resentment, bitterness, and hatred of Pakistani nation against the United States. The widespread attacks on NATO convoys are demonstration of this anger. In this situation, it is not possible for the U.S. to accomplish its agenda in this part of the world, therefore they (Americans) are forced to change their policy."

"Agreement On Pak-U.S. Joint Team For Ending Uprising: Use Of Force Would Not Solve Problem," an editorial in the second-largest, center-right nationalist Urdu daily "Nawa-i-Waqt" (cir. 125,000)

"The rulers should tell Obama administration that withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan is the only solution of the problem. Predator drone attacks should also stop.... Our elders should take notice of the press report that Taliban have decided to send their warriors to Islamabad."

"Policy Must Be Reviewed In The Light Of Ground Realities," an editorial in the Peshawar-based Urdu-language daily "Mashriq" (cir. 55,000) (02/12)

"It is true that President Obama has ordered to review the U.S. policy on Pakistan and Afghanistan, but his tone is not so much different from that of President Bush. It is very difficult and complicated for even a super power to resolve issues with its military might. President Obama must not only learn lesson from the outcome of this war on terror, but also devise policy in the light of the mistakes committed during this global drive."

"U.S. Committee To Review Pak-Afghan Policy," an editorial in the Lahore-based independent Urdu daily "Din" (circ. 5000) (02/12)

"[The formation of] Pakistan-U.S. joint committee and the U.S. committee to review Pak-Afghan policy are indeed signals that any future policy changes will take Pakistan's reservations [about the regional situation] into consideration."

"Decision To Form Pak-U.S. Consultative Group," an editorial in the Lahore-based Urdu daily "Waqt" (circ. 5000) (02/12)

"It is imperative that while formulating a new policy in the war on terror based on Mr. Holbrooke's fact-finding report the U.S. leadership give due consideration to Pakistan's compulsions and public opinion instead of using friendly countries like Pakistan as a scapegoat."

"U.S. Review Of Pak-Afghan Policy," an editorial in the center-right Urdu daily "Pakistan" (cir. 10,000) (02/12)

"President Obama has acknowledged Pakistan's invaluable services in the war on terror. U.S. President's order to review Pak-Afghan policy proves that a need has been felt to carefully consider what Pakistan is doing for peace in the region. The arrival of President Obama's special representative in Pakistan, his meetings with senior officials and the formation of a Pak-U.S. committee are all positive measures."

"The Tentacles Of Terrorism," an op-ed by I.M. Mohsin in the center-right national English daily "The Nation" (cir. 20,000) (02/12)

"Ambassador Holbrooke has made an emphatic plea for a change of direction. It is encouraging to note that the U.S., learning from history, is coming around to the treat Afghanistan, as General Petraeus said, as the 'graveyard of empires.'... Ambassador Holbrooke would be well advised if he focuses on the formula spelt out by Stratfor recently whereby a Taliban government can be installed as they did not attack the U.S. This is meant to alienate Al-Qaeda. He should also arrange assured funds for reconstruction in Afghanistan and Pakistan with a mechanism to ensure that these are spent properly by all concerned."

"Holbrooke On 'The Afpak Mission,'" an op-ed by Aziz-ud-Din in the center-right national English daily "The Nation" (cir. 20,000) (02/12)

"The next two months during which a review of the US strategy in Afghanistan and Pakistan is to be completed provides Pakistani leadership an opportunity to get its concerns registered. There is a growing realization among some of the important people around President Obama that the old policy regarding militancy in Pakistan and Afghanistan would not pay.... What is needed is to convince the major U.S. players involved in the formulation of the new strategy for the region of the need to help in the resolution of the Kashmir issue, shift focus from the use of force to diplomacy, rehabilitation and development and call an end to the drone attacks. It remains to be seen if those in Islamabad interacting with Holbrooke, Bruce Riedel, General Petraeus and other important officials have the capacity to do the job."

"Countering Terrorism At Ground Zero," an op-ed by Ikram Sehgal in the centrist national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (02/12)

"A brief interaction with the Holbrooke team in Islamabad conveyed not only their quality but their intention and commitment thereof. The finest was on display, the initial vibes were very positive....

the Holbrooke team must consider the destabilization in the region that will occur as a result if the Army is put at odds with its own people. This is a war that has to be won. It can be won if the U.S. realizes that it will take time as well as compromise."

"A Precarious Situation," an op-ed by Tariq Fatemi in the Karachi-based center-left independent national English daily "Dawn" (cir. 55,000) (02/12)

"Washington is now establishing an 'umbilical cord' relationship between Afghanistan and Pakistan, henceforth holding us accountable for U.S. setbacks in that country. At the same time, Washington wishes to set 'clear and achievable goals for Afghanistan in a comprehensive strategy for which Washington expects its allies to take major responsibility.'"

"Window Of Opportunity," an op-ed by Irfan Siddiqui in the leading mass circulation centrist Urdu daily "Jang" (cir. 300,000)

"A positive outcome so far as a result of Holbrooke's visit is that both the countries have established a joint dialogue group for cooperation in security and other matters.... It seems that Obama administration has begun looking at the futility of continuing with Bush's policies."
Patterson